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Director

October 9, 2002

TO: Each Supervisor

PRG WWS

FROM: Bryce Yokomizo, Director

SUBJECT: **INTERIM EVALUATION REPORT ON AFTER-SCHOOL ENRICHMENT PROGRAM**

This is to provide you with a summary of the first evaluation for the Los Angeles County Office of Education's (LACOE) After-School Enrichment (ASE) Program, which was completed by Public Works, Inc., a nonprofit educational consulting firm located in Pasadena.

Background

Your Board approved the After-School Enrichment Program on May 11, 1999, which authorized the DPSS Director to enter into contracts with LACOE and LAUSD to develop and implement after-school enrichment programs designed to offer a safe environment that included academic assistance, homework help, enrichment activities, recreation, and quality child care at well-supervised school sites. The targeted countywide sites were at those schools with the highest concentration of CalWORKs families. The contracts also required annual evaluation reports.

Findings

The report reflects that:

- Seventy-five percent of ASE Program personnel interviewed believe the program had helped parents either gain employment or return to school to improve their employment opportunities.
- ASE Program and district personnel have developed as many ways of delivering the after-school program as there are sites. This was most notable in the array of math, literacy and technology programs and activities listed as successful in engaging students and facilitating learning.

- Patterns in the stories about students shared by ASE Program coordinators suggest anecdotally that the program has positively affected student participants academically, particularly in the completion of homework and positively influenced their behavior and self-esteem.
- Staff reported difficulties with computer equipment and identifying CalWORKs eligible children. They further indicated that these problems negatively impacted the sites ability to reach their program capacity. To assist with this issue which occurred during the start-up phase, DPSS has since provided ongoing technical training to LACOE staff to ensure they are using the system correctly to identify the children.

Math and Literacy

A major objective of the ASE Program is to increase academic performance of the children, particularly in the areas of literacy and mathematics. While most program personnel said that they addressed both literacy and mathematics, there appears to be a slight preference to focus on literacy. Staff also expressed the desire to deliver quality academic instruction that did not "look" like the regular school day.

The interviewed staff noted that working on the computer offered an alternate context in which to learn and helped students build computer skills. Staff indicated that using computer games had been successful with students, particularly in math; tactics such as analytical puzzles, brain teasers and math related board games helped students with the cognitive processes related to mathematics; making activities fun and "tricking" students into learning were successful strategies; and students really enjoyed academic competitions such as math and spelling bees, and creative writing contests.

Next Steps

This evaluation is the first in a series of reports that will be utilized to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of LACOE's ASE Program. Public Works, Inc. will release a year-end final report discussing the baseline findings from a set of comprehensive site visits, stakeholder surveys and student outcomes analysis from a sample of ASE Program sites. I will share a summary and copy of this report with your Board when received.

BY:ve

Attachment

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Superintendent, LACOE

**Evaluation of the
LACOE After School Enrichment Program**

Los Angeles County Office of Education

**Interim Report:
Summary of
Description of
Overarching Program Elements**

April 2002

Submitted by

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Executive Summary

The LACOE After-School Enrichment Program (ASEP) is an after-school program with the primary goal of improving academic achievement. The program was developed and is currently administered by the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) through an agreement with the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). Schools eligible for funding include those within the County of Los Angeles, but outside of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) with the highest percentage of students from CalWORKs families.

Through an RFP process, Public Works, Inc. was selected to conduct the evaluation of the After-School Enrichment Program. The primary objective of the evaluation is to review and describe the status of the After-School Enrichment Program implementation at the program and local (site) levels in relation to the original intent of the grant and a set of goals set forth jointly by LACOE and DPSS.

During the first phase of the evaluation, key personnel (usually the site coordinator) at each of the 92 ASEP sites were asked to offer perspectives specific to their ASEP site on six broad program areas selected by LACOE: funding streams, enrollment and program attendance, program support, family and parent involvement, math and literacy programs and success stories. From the summary of interview responses across the 92 ASEP sites, several trends emerged:

- ASEP and district personnel have developed as many ways of delivering the after-school program as there are sites. This was most notable in the array of math, literacy and technology programs and activities listed as successful in engaging students and facilitating learning.
- Seventy-five percent of the ASEP personnel interviewed said their program had helped parents either gain employment or return to school to improve their employment opportunities.
- In general, after-school personnel highlighted the instrumental roles of the school site, district and LACOE in supporting and administering the program. At the LACOE level, many stressed the positive role of the LACOE regional coordinators.
- Patterns in the stories about students shared by ASEP coordinators suggest anecdotally that the program has positively affected student participants academically, particularly in the completion of homework.
- Patterns in the stories about students also anecdotally suggest that the program has positively influenced student participants' behavior and self-esteem.

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- The identification and verification of eligible CalWORKs students was a concern among a number of sites. Many were unclear of the identification process. While all sites received lists of eligible CalWORKs students, some sites had trouble identifying the eligible population at their school sites. Others expressed frustration over the certification process at LACOE and some cited difficulties with recruiting identified families to participate. The core consequence of encountering identification barriers has been that many sites have been unable to fill their programs to capacity.

ASEP Background

The After-School Enrichment Program (ASEP) is an after-school program with the primary goal of improving academic achievement. The program was developed and is currently administered by the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) through an agreement with the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). Schools eligible for funding include those within the County of Los Angeles, but outside of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) with the highest percentage of students from CalWORKs¹ families.

The program seeks to provide a safe environment that promotes the academic, social and behavioral well being of elementary school students through non-school-day intervention. In addition to enhancing academic achievement, programs may offer enrichment and recreational activities while also addressing the childcare needs of eligible families. Although the program carries the title "after-school," participating schools are not limited to after-school hours. Programs may also provide services before school, on pupil-free days and on holidays and vacations, including periods when year round schools are off-track. In order to respond locally to the unique needs of the included populations, initiatives are site-based. Each participating site submitted an individual work plan that while in compliance with the requirements of LACOE, also focuses on the needs of the students at the site level.

Funding for the program has been provided in three phases: Readiness Grants, Start-Up Grants and Ongoing Operations Grants. The ASEP awarded the first Readiness Grants in June 1999 with several schools commencing program operations in the Start-Up Funding phase in February 2000. The program is currently active in 92 elementary schools in 20 school districts across Los Angeles County. For a list of the active sites and program enrollment, please refer to Appendix B.

Overview of the ASEP Evaluation

Through an RFP process, Public Works, Inc. was selected in November 2001 to conduct the evaluation of the After-School Enrichment Program. Public Works, Inc. is a Pasadena-based non-profit organization dedicated to working with schools, government, parents and communities in the areas of accountability, assessment and evaluation services. The members of the evaluation team possess varied backgrounds in the social services and education and have extensive experience evaluating innovations in school settings, including after-school programs. The evaluation design was based on the requirements set forth in the original evaluation RFP developed by LACOE.

The primary objective of the evaluation is to review and describe the status of program implementation at the program and local (site) levels in relation to the original intent of the grant and the following goals set forth by LACOE and DPSS:

- To increase academic achievement in the Reading/ Language Arts domain;

¹ The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Program provides financial aid and services to eligible impoverished families in California through the federal TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) Program. The primary goal of the program is to mobilize people from welfare to work. In Los Angeles County, the state-wide program is operated by DPSS.

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- To increase academic achievement in the Mathematical domain;
- To provide childcare in a safe environment; and
- To collaborate with community agencies and institutions to provide supplemental support.

Based on these objectives, the evaluation aims to address the following broad research questions:

1. Is the LACOE After-School Enrichment Program effective?
2. In what ways are school site programs affecting schools and neighborhoods? What positive outcomes are associated with these programs at the local level?
3. In what ways are school site programs affecting students? How does the degree of participation of students affect program outcomes?
4. How do local program characteristics interact with student characteristics to improve student achievement?
5. How do the ASEPs interact with other after-school efforts at the local level?

The evaluation design includes both process and outcome measures by utilizing a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Process measures provide information on the quality of implementation within and across program initiatives including the identification of key barriers and challenges as well as successful strategies. Outcome measures related to students, program staff and parents provide information on how effective the program is in reaching its desired goals. Together, process and outcome measures provide sufficient information to point toward what students achieve or gain because of the intervention and why, from a programmatic perspective, they achieve or gain.

In addition to a review of relevant literature and interviews of key personnel at each of the 92 program sites (and an additional site that is no longer offering the program), LACOE selected a subset of 33 sites to participate in the following evaluation strategies:

- Student, parent and program staff surveys;
- Student performance data including SAT-9; and
- Intensive site visits that include interviews and program observation.

A set of pillars of successful after-school program sites set forth by LACOE and DPSS was used to determine the themes of the data collection and the criteria used for the analysis, interpretation and conclusions. All evaluation instruments are designed to examine program implementation in the areas. Refer to Appendix C for a complete list of the pillars.

Overview of Overarching Themes Report

This is the first report in the After-School Enrichment Program evaluation. This report describes the findings from phone interviews conducted with key personnel at each of the 92 active program sites (and one program site that is not active). Through a process facilitated by Public Works, Inc., LACOE selected six broad program areas to explore across sites. The areas include: funding streams, enrollment and program attendance, program support, family and parent involvement, math and literacy programs and success stories. ASEP personnel (in most cases, the program coordinator) were interviewed about the six

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areas using the following key questions. Refer to Appendix A for the complete interview protocol.

Funding Streams

1. Are funding streams other than LACOE contributing to your program?

Enrollment and Program Attendance

2. Have you been able to enroll and retain a consistent group of student participants in your program? Have you been able to keep students until the end of the day?

Programmatic Support

3. What have your school site, district and LACOE provided that has been useful? What barriers have you encountered?

Family and Parent Involvement

4. Have you found any evidence that previously unemployed parents of your students have found work and are therefore using the program as childcare?

Math and Literacy Programs

5. Can you describe a literacy, mathematics, technology or other academic related program or activity going on in your after-school program for which you feel particularly proud or feel is particularly successful?

Success Stories

6. Can you share a specific example, or examples of a student or students in your program who have been impacted by the after-school program?

The findings from the interviews were compiled and summaries for each area are presented in the following section of the report.

Summary

Funding Streams

In order to understand the scope of programming, both in terms of number of students being served and how the program is funded, ASEP personnel were asked about the funding streams that contributed to their programs, as well as other programs that may have also been running at the school site during after-school hours.

Across sites, the number of students being served ranged from less than 10 to over 100 (for enrollment by site, refer to Appendix B). While at most sites, funding from LACOE allows for up to 50 students, additional funding has allowed some programs to broaden the number of participating students. While fluctuations in enrollment in sites funded solely by LACOE will be discussed in the section on enrollment and program attendance, in general, sites with more than 50 students enrolled have leveraged funding from sources outside of LACOE.

At the majority of sites, the ASEP was the sole source of funding, though about 10% of the personnel interviewed were unaware of the funding sources contributing to their programs. Among sites in which multiple funding streams were blended, the State's Before and After-School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program and Federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants were the most common contributors. Among these schools, some were blending one or both of these grants with the ASEP funding. A few sites were receiving monies from other public sources. For example, one school has leveraged state funds to serve students during intersession.

Some sites were also receiving funding from private sources including the James Irving and Richstone Family Foundations. In addition, a few said that they had received CORAL² funding. Finally, a limited number of programs had leveraged additional funds from the school, their districts or by implementing a fee structure for ineligible students who wanted to participate.

Based on interview responses, the ASEP was the only after-school program at about half of the schools. Among schools with multiple after-school initiatives, the most common programs were city-based parks and recreation programs and school-based after-school tutoring and intervention programs. At a few sites, students from different programs shared program activities such as snack and recreation. At most, programs ran independently of one another.

In several schools, programs funded through the Safe Neighborhoods and 21st Century Learning Centers grants ran separately from the After-School Enrichment Program. At these sites, the state and/or federally funded programs provided programming to a separate population of students and did not share resources with the ASEP. It is important to note that among those interviewed who were aware that their program was sharing the school with other after-school initiatives, most knew the names of the programs but could not

² The Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning (CORAL) Initiative is funded through the James Irving Foundation. This program funds a variety of community development efforts aimed at improving education for youth in California, including community-based after-school programs.

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describe them. This was particularly true among the schools in one district where the administration of the ASEP was subcontracted to an outside agency.

Enrollment and Program Attendance

Enrolling and Retaining Participants

ASEP personnel were asked about their experiences with enrolling students in the program and motivating students to attend. It is important to mention that the way in which personnel defined “successful” enrollment varied slightly across sites. At most schools, LACOE allotted spots for 50 CalWORKs students. Some personnel who replied that they had not had trouble enrolling students said that they were serving 15-25 students, while others with enrollments of 40-45 felt that they had not been successful.

Among approximately 30% of respondents who said that enrollment had been a challenge, the reasons given were very similar. Most said that the high mobility rate of the families enrolled in the program greatly affected both program enrollment and attendance. Several noted that while students liked the program, their families would move and they would disappear. Identification of eligible students was another challenge listed by personnel. They had trouble finding families through the school, district and LACOE. Related to this, one site coordinator noted that several of her participants became ineligible for the program when their families surpassed the five-year limit for enrollment in CalWORKs.

The majority of respondents indicated that they had been successful in enrolling and retaining a consistent group of participants. Some indicated that they did not need to employ any strategies to encourage enrollment and attendance. About 10% of the programs have a waiting list. One site coordinator interviewed commented that the waiting list serves as an incentive because parents and students know that poor attendance will result in losing a spot in the program.

Motivating Students and Parents to Attend the ASEP

Outside of the sites with waiting lists and those not using incentives (described below), the remaining sites have developed a variety of strategies. In general, these methods were targeted toward either parents or students (or a combination of both).

Among sites that targeted parents for recruiting and maintaining a consistent group of students in the ASEP, most respondents highlighted communication as a key component. Many have appealed to the students’ needs for extra academic help as well as the opportunity for students to receive assistance with homework. Most personnel said that this strategy has been very successful, especially among parents who, because of language barriers, are unable to help their children with homework at home. Program staff have also been accommodating with parents’ schedules. Several noted that when the program began, they had trouble with attendance because students had outside activities such as Catechism during after-school hours. In order to not lose the student for an entire day, some personnel decided to work the program around student and parents schedules on an as-needed basis. Finally, some site coordinators have found following-up with parents when students are absent to be successful. According to respondents, a phone call home makes parents feel accountable and less likely to allow students to miss the program.

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without good reason. A few site coordinators also noted that this method helps connect them with the parents, helping the parents to understand that “someone cares about their children.” Interestingly, none of the staff interviewed mentioned that they highlighted the childcare function of the program as a motivation for parents to enroll their students.

Personnel also appeal to students to encourage enrollment and attendance. As a means of getting students to enroll in the program, program staff emphasize to students, the enrichment and recreational aspect of the program. Several noted that they work hard to provide programming that is educational and fun, but different enough from the school day that students feel like they are participating in something special. Personnel said that this strategy is also successful in maintaining consistent student attendance upon enrollment. Various programs also utilize incentive programs. Students with good attendance receive stickers, small prizes or raffle tickets that can be redeemed for larger items at the end of a week or month. One program awards certificates at the end of the month for perfect attendance. Others offer special field trips, assemblies or events (such as pizza parties) for students with good attendance.

Motivating Students to Stay to the End of the Program Day

Keeping students to the end of the day was a considerably more significant challenge than finding and keeping a consistent group of student participants according to ASEP staff. While some sites have made it a policy contingent on student enrollment that students stay until the end of the program day (both the state and federal grants require a minimum number of hours that the student be served), most have not. Many noted that, at some point, they experienced difficulty in motivating students and parents to stay. According to respondents, while some of the reluctance came from students, parents were the main reason students did not stay until the end of the program day.

While reasons varied slightly from site to site as to why parents wanted to pick up students before the end of the program, four themes emerged. Most commonly, parents wanted to pick up their children after work, regardless of how their work schedule coincided with the end of the after-school program. Safety was another common reason parents picked their children up early from the program. This was particularly true among schools where students came from the neighborhood and would normally walk home (as opposed to being bused from an outside community). According to ASEP personnel, during the winter months when it was dark before the program ended, parents did not feel safe walking their children home. Third, parents elected to pick-up students early in order to take them to other activities. Finally, at two schools, the site coordinators interviewed stated that parents viewed the purpose of the program as to provide homework assistance and would therefore insist that their children leave after this period.

According to ASEP staff, most students wanted to stay until the end of the program day. However, among those who did not, wanting to be with friends was the main reason staff felt that students did not want to stay until the end of the day.

Although motivating students and parents to stay until the end of the program day was a challenge at some point during the program’s history at many sites, most had devised strategies to keep students until the end of the program day. Depending on the site, program staff found a variety of successful approaches with parents. Communication was a

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common method. Many program staff speak to parents who want to pick-up their children early about the benefits of having their child stay until the end of the day. They highlight the fact that students may not otherwise get to participate in some of the activities offered in the program. At two sites where the site coordinators have had trouble getting parents to buy into the program's importance outside of homework assistance, homework assistance is saved for the last period of the day. This way, parents allow their children to attend the full program day. Another saves homework until the end of the day and then invited parents who come early to help their children with their homework.

At sites where communication has not been successful, a few site coordinators have made schedules flexible enough so that parents can pick-up students early on predetermined days. These staff commented that while this measure is a compromise, students whose parents would most likely take them out for the entire day will attend at least a portion of the program. A few sites have decided that some participation is better than none, and allow parents to decide when the student is picked-up from the program.

Personnel have also identified a number of strategies for motivating students to stay until the end of the day. Most site coordinators save enrichment and recreational activities until the end of the day. Others use incentive systems similar to those described previously. Students receive small tokens or points redeemable for prizes for staying until the end of the day. Another site holds math and spelling contests at the end of the day. Motivated by the possibility of winning a prize, the site coordinator said that students either want to compete or "stick around to see who wins."

Program Support

ASEP personnel provided feedback on what support LACOE, their school district and the program's school had provided to the after-school program that was useful. They also discussed barriers they encountered, as well as what these offices could further provide to help run a successful program.

In addition to being generally supportive, funding and excellent regional coordinators were cited most often as resources provided through LACOE that ASEP personnel found helpful in creating and maintaining an effective program. Respondents noted that the LACOE staff were accessible and helpful in navigating the paperwork associated with the program as well as finding resources in the community to contribute to the program. Several site coordinators also highlighted the usefulness of the training and workshops provided by LACOE and the University of California, Irvine and three mentioned the value of visiting other ASEP sites. ASEP personnel also appreciated the computers and technology support provided by LACOE as well as the resources and general information provided by the organization. Finally, several personnel were appreciative of the lists of eligible students provided through LACOE.

At the district level, the ASEP personnel interviewed found the resources, information and materials accessible through the district to be helpful. While the degree of contact between the after-school program personnel and district varied among districts, those with more contact felt that the district was particularly helpful with providing assistance with paperwork, fiscal services and lists of eligible students. In one district, several sites named

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the security provided to the program through the district to be integral to the success of the program.

The interviewed ASEP staff listed the use of space, facilities and a supportive school staff most often as being helpful at the school site level. Most notably, ASEP staff reported that general support from the school, particularly the principal, greatly contributed to the success of the program. Many personnel also found the materials, supplies and resources supplied by the school to be helpful.

Many of the ASEP staff interviewed stated that they had not encountered any barriers, and that they did not feel a need for any additional resources or support. In general, the respondents were very positive about the roles of LACOE and their respective school district and school site.

Despite the positive tone, several personnel cited that they had encountered barriers that detracted from the success of their programs. Identifying and verifying the eligibility of students were the biggest barriers ASEP staff encountered according to the interviews.³ Many were unclear of the process and expressed their frustration over being unable to identify students. Several said that they were provided with lists that were outdated. Others stated that they would like either LACOE or the district to provide lists of eligible students. ASEP personnel also found the verification process to be a barrier. One site coordinator interviewed pointed out that she could not serve students until their status was verified, and thus in the meantime she had to turn them away from the program. Because some ASEP staff found LACOE and the district to be helpful in this process, the trend in the interviews suggest that not all ASEP staff have the same level of knowledge regarding the process of identifying and verifying eligible CalWORKs students.

At the school level, two types of barriers emerged. The first was a lack of support from the regular school day staff. While this was mentioned in a minority of interviews, ASEP staff that listed lack of school support as a barrier had difficulty accessing school facilities, recruiting students and making linkages to the regular school day. At these sites, the interviewed staff felt that the regular school day staff did not understand the objectives of the after-school program, and therefore, did not see it as a vital extension of the regular school day. When asked what the school could provide that would be useful, these staff felt that increased communication and awareness would help improve the relationship between the regular and after-school day.

Space and facilities barriers were also present at the school level. Though this may be tied to buy-in from school day staff who control these facilities, this was an issue in some sites that reported good school support. Numerous ASEP personnel noted that they did not have access to space, that they shared space with other programs, or that they did not have a regular space in which to hold the program. For some, lack of adequate space meant that they did not have the facilities to store program materials. For others, activities were limited.

³ A list of eligible students is given out to sites by the regional coordinators. The list is developed from DPSS eligible CalWORKs children, sorted by zip code. LACOE, in turn, matches zip codes with school sites. The list is never completely accurate due to many variables: a) one zip code covers multiple sites; b) more than one zip code covers one site; or c) families move in and out of areas.

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Beyond the school level, ASEP personnel spoke more generally about the barriers encountered and what further assistance they would like from these offices. One exception was that several sites in the same district commented that security for the after-school program was promised by the district but not provided.

As a capstone to the area of program support, each respondent was asked to complete the following sentence: "Without LACOE funding, we could not provide..." While their exact answers varied slightly, across the board respondents stated that without funding from LACOE, either the programs would not exist, or would not exist to the caliber made possible through the funding and support of the LACOE ASEP.

Family and Parent Involvement

Family Employment

One of the purposes of the ASEP is to provide a safe and enriching environment during after-school hours so that the parent(s) or guardians of participating students can work. To this end, ASEP personnel were asked if they had found any evidence (formal or anecdotal) that the program at their school was serving this purpose. About 10% of the staff interviewed said that they were not aware of the employment status of the parents of student participants. Another 15% indicated that they did not have evidence that the employment status of participants' parents had changed. However, the remaining 75% of ASEP personnel interviewed said their program had helped parents either gain employment or return to school to improve their employment opportunities. Though none of the staff interviewed could provide exact numbers, estimates ranged from one or two families to over 30 in a single program.

Many of the respondents noted that among the parents who were already employed, the ASEP serves a childcare function. A couple of the site coordinators interviewed commented that parents had told them that the ASEP's extended hours allowed them options they would not otherwise have such as working longer hours or commuting to another city to work. The anecdotal evidence provided by the ASEP staff also indicates that across sites, parents are very grateful for not only the childcare function, but also the services and activities their children receive.

Parent Involvement

About one-third of the ASEP personnel interviewed said that parents volunteer in the program. Parents serve in various capacities at these sites. Some volunteer consistently and help with specific activities, most commonly, during either homework time or reading. Other parent volunteers drop-in on an as-needed basis and help with supervision or chaperone field trips. Several of the ASEP staff said they were planning to incorporate parent volunteers. ASEP personnel at two sites discussed barriers they encountered with recruiting parent volunteers. Other than the obvious challenge of having parents who work during the after-school program hours, three of the ASEP staff interviewed said that parents are discouraged by the extensive finger-printing and TB testing processes they are required to obtain in order to volunteer.

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ASEP personnel pointed-out that parents and families are involved in the ASEP in ways other than volunteering directly in the program. Many help with supplies for special events. One site coordinator has a parent who takes art supplies home and prepares art projects for the program's art instructor. Parents also attend ASEP performances and a couple of the sites have parent nights specifically for parents in the after-school program. Parents also visit the program to observe their children and many interact with after-school program staff during check-out at the end of the day. A couple of the ASEP staff suggested that they had become the parents' link to the school because they (parents) feel more comfortable approaching after-school staff who are accessible during check-out (as opposed to meeting formally with classroom teachers). According to the ASEP staff, they often serve as an intermediate between parents and regular school day staff. Parents communicate with ASEP staff who, in turn, communicate with regular school day staff and then relay information back to parents.

Parents are also involved at the school site through parent classes, particularly English as a Second Language courses. Some participate on advisory boards or belong to parent groups. Though the number was limited, a couple of the after-school programs have coordinated parent education and involvement at the school level, with the after-school program. In one case, the after-school program's coordinator also coordinated parent education at the school. In two others, the ASEP coordinator was the school's community liaison.

Math and Literacy Programs

One of the primary goals of the After-School Enrichment Program is to increase academic performance, particularly in literacy and mathematics. Because it was beyond the scope of the brief phone interview format to develop a comprehensive description of the academic and enrichment programs of each ASEP, three broad topics regarding literacy and mathematics program were selected to explore. ASEP program staff were asked to highlight a literacy, mathematics, technology or other academic related activity within their program they felt has been particularly successful. Staff were also asked to discuss strategies they found to be lucrative in engaging and motivating students in academic activities. Finally, the personnel interviewed gave insights into the linkages between the regular school day and the after-school program. Before describing the trends that emerged in these categories, it is important to point out that respondents self selected which activities they chose to highlight. For this reason, it should not be assumed that if a site did not mention utilizing a particular approach, that they are not using it or that the linkage does not exist.

Successful Approaches and Strategies in Promoting Learning

Most notable was the variety of approaches, strategies and programs being implemented across sites. While similarities could be found in particular strands of programs within the same district (for instance, multiple sites utilizing the same literacy software), only one district chose to utilize a standard math or literacy curriculum across all of its participating sites (this district will be discussed below). While it cannot be concluded that all of the program staff interviewed worked with regular school day staff in designing their program, responses indicate that many had collaborated in the program start-up phase, and that

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many continued to collaborate on a consistent basis to make program adjustments that meet the needs of students.

While most program personnel said that they addressed both literacy and mathematics, there appears to be a slight preference to focus on literacy. Several ASEP staff interviewed stated that they focused on specific aspects of literacy and language arts over mathematics because test scores and teacher feedback indicated the need. A couple of site coordinators interviewed said that they even focused on literacy and language arts during homework time because the non-English speaking parents at home would not be able to help students in this area, whereas they may be able to help with mathematics. Outside of literacy and mathematics, about 15% interviewed also mentioned a focus on other academic subjects including science and social studies.

The program features highlighted by staff as successful ranged from an approach or strategy used throughout the after-school programs to specific activities within the ASEP. For this reason, the following discussion will begin with broad approaches and continue with a list of specific programs used across sites.

Across many sites, ASEP personnel expressed the desire to deliver quality academic instruction that did not “look” like the regular school day. Using hands-on activities, making activities fun, and emphasizing group work were among the most common program-wide approaches interviewed personnel felt had been successful in facilitating the learning process. Some said that offering a variety of activities each day helped to keep students from losing interest in the more academic portions of the program. Others noted that they worked in the students’ interests, for example, specifically providing materials that was of interest to students for literacy activities. A minority mentioned that their program focused on learning academic skills indirectly through enrichment activities. However, only six of the 93 interviewed mentioned the integration of academic standards (state) into enrichment activities.

There were different approaches to structuring the delivery of academic activities that the ASEP personnel felt was successful. Some offered a set period of both math and literacy everyday (usually between 30-45 minutes). Others preferred to spend alternating program days focusing on math or literacy (for example, math on Mondays and Wednesdays and literacy on Tuesdays and Thursdays). In another pattern, math and literacy was divided into a discrete period depending on the length of a curricular unit (for example, a site might spend 5 days on literacy and 5 days on math). Needs-based tutoring and intervention for a targeted audience was the final pattern of service delivery mentioned by program staff. Several (but not the majority) sites said they had identified a select group of underperformers to receive tutoring or academic programming in math, literacy or both. Since each of the above patterns was mentioned by more than one site as instrumental to successful learning, the trend suggests that no one method of delivery has yet emerged as more successful than any other. What does seem to make a difference, based on interview responses, is that the delivery is organized and sequential (i.e. developed in advance with a clear path of where students begin and a benchmark for where they are headed).

ASEP personnel interviewed also listed computer labs and specific software they liked in the areas of both math and literacy. In addition to being popular with students, the interviewed staff noted that working on the computer offered an alternate context in which

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to learn and helped them to build computer skills. A program called *Wiggle Works* was mentioned by various personnel as an effective and fun math and literacy software. *Alpha Smarts*, a hand-held instrument with a keyboard designed to facilitate word processing skills was also mentioned by multiple site coordinators as both popular and useful to students.

Various sites said that using games had been successful with students, particularly in math. Some ASEP personnel mentioned that tactics such as analytical puzzles, brain teasers and math related board games helped students with the cognitive processes related to mathematics. Manipulatives such as flash cards and play money for counting and money concepts were also listed by many of the ASEP program staff. They found these strategies were especially effective with younger students. Only two curricular programs specific to math were noted by site coordinators: *Math STEPs* and *Frog Works* (also literacy).

Site coordinators highlighted several techniques in literacy and language arts. Various sites found success with one or a multiple of the following: silent reading, journal writing, poetry, writing prompts, creating writing and reader's theater. While several mentioned a focus on phonics, others sited the need for work in reading comprehension. A few of the ASEP personnel said that they had created literacy stations whereupon students rotated through various activities such as reading, responding to a prompt and listening. The site coordinators that discussed this approach found it successful because it focused on multiple levels of literacy.

District-Wide Approach

One of the districts selected an outside provider to administer the program at each site. This decision was made at the district level and affected 20 ASEP sites. Several of the ASEP personnel interviewed said that they liked the program structure and appreciated the daily lesson plans and ability to track progress. Multiple coordinators also highlighted a specific piece of the program as successful including creative writing, and read out loud components. A couple expressed concerns, however, and several mentioned that they would like more flexibility in program offerings (the outside providers selects the program content). They felt that students would enjoy the program more if offered enrichment activities. A few also noted that they felt the program day was too long. This information is triangulated in the enrollment section of the interviews where the same site coordinators discussed having issues keeping students until the end of the program day.

Motivating and Engaging Students

ASEP personnel inventoried an assortment of strategies they found to be successful in motivating and engaging students in math and literacy activities. Many of the program staff made the general statement that "making activities fun" and "tricking students into learning" were successful strategies. ASEP staff said that this was done by integrating educational games, offering hands-on activities and actively involving students in activities. Several also said that students really enjoyed academic competitions such as math and spelling bees and creative writing contests.

Multiple sites said that they had implemented incentive programs. Similar to what was being used to encourage program attendance, offering stickers or tickets to be used toward

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larger prizes was helpful in keeping students engaged according to the program staff who were using them.

Finally, a couple of the site coordinators credited the after-school program staff with the power to motivate students to learn. These individuals said that the enthusiasm of the staff was contagious, and that in their experience, students mirrored the attitudes set forth by the program staff. To this end, these sites said that they made it a point to model enthusiastic behavior.

School Linkages

Based on the interview findings, the most prominent trend regarding linkages between the regular and "after-school" day was that most of the ASEP personnel said that they have active connections with the regular school day. Of the few who noted that their either had no connection, or that the relationship was poor, one of the site coordinators also mentioned that it had been difficult to get the regular school day staff (and principal) to buy-in to the importance of the program.

While the majority interviewed said that they had a relationship with the regular school day, the strength of this relationship varied between sites. Almost all of the ASEP personnel said that they communicated with regular school day teachers and staff on an informal basis, whether through phone calls or notes. In addition, most said that they informed teachers when their students entered the program, and some said that teachers make student referrals to the program. Fewer said that they had a formal system for sharing information between the regular school day and after-school program. Among those who did, several had developed forms regarding student needs. These forms were distributed to teachers of students in the program. Teachers complete the forms and return them to key ASEP personnel. In turn, the documents are used to place students in activities. Others said that they set up one-on-one meetings with regular school day teachers. During this time, student needs and progress are discussed.

In addition to surveying teachers regarding student needs, multiple sites said that they also work with resource personnel to obtain student information, including assessment data. About one-third of the ASEP staff interviewed also work in the school day, and therefore had access to the information.

Some sites said that they consulted with teachers in designing program curricula. Others mentioned that teachers from the regular school day offered materials to help align the regular and after-school days.

At the actual program level, ASEP personnel at about half of the sites said that teachers from the regular school day also taught in the after-school program. In addition to the obvious carry-over from the regular school day, a few ASEP personnel said that parents felt more comfortable approaching teachers in the after-school environment (and were able to build stronger connections than if the teacher was not in the after-school program). At some programs, teachers who do not teach in the after-school program (as well as school administrators) visit on a periodic basis to observe students. At a couple of sites, teachers drop in on an as-needed basis to help students who are in their regular school day classroom.

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Success Stories

Knowing that “success” cannot only be measured by an increase in test scores, ASEP personnel were asked to relate “success stories” of students in the after-school program who they thought had demonstrated positive change. Based on their own observations and feedback from parents and regular school day teachers, all of the program staff interviewed readily described at least one student, often multiple. Although the definition of “success” was left up to the ASEP staff interviewed, responses included stories about behavioral, social and academic progress made by students in the ASEP.

Success with Behavior

Many of the ASEP program staff noted that they had observed improvements along behavioral dimensions. Several told stories about students who began as aggressive and negative. According to the program staff, these students acted out in class, did not treat their peers or instructors with respect and were generally disruptive both in the regular and after school programs. For example:

The student was having behavioral problems in both the school and in the classroom. He could not sit still and was disruptive to other students. One day when an instructional aide was absent, the site coordinator put him in charge of leading the younger children from one classroom to another. He liked the responsibility and since that day, the site coordinator and after-school teachers have observed that he tries harder in classes, is quieter and volunteers to help with the younger students.

Other personnel offered stories about students who were very shy when the program began, but over time, had begun to “come out of their shells.” Between both groups of students, an increase in self-confidence and self-esteem was mentioned most often as a contributor to the change in behavior, for example:

The fifth grade boy had participated in the program for three years. Prior to enrolling, he had behavioral problems, was often suspended, had a negative attitude toward authority and was labeled a “bad child.” After his participation in the program, he developed a positive opinion about himself and toward learning. Program activities developed his natural leadership abilities, and he has helped his fellow students with learning as well. He is very enthusiastic about the drama program and has a position as a leader in the new business math class. If he had not participated in the program, the student would probably not have received the attention he needed to develop his previously uncultivated skills.

The program staff interviewed felt that increased self-confidence lead to other good behaviors, including respect and a willingness to participate both in the after-school program and in the regular school day.

Academic Successes

ASEP personnel also described students who had shown academic improvements. Citing evidence provided by regular school day teachers, as well as their own, after-school staff

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noted that many students had begun to “catch-up” to grade level. While most of the evidence was anecdotal, ASEP staff interviewed discussed improvements in both math and literacy and told various stories about growth in students whose first language was not English:

The site coordinator discussed her own kindergarten students as success stories. Many of her regular school day students also participate in the after-school program. They perform better in class than students not enrolled in the program, often outperforming them on tests.

Three general themes emerged regarding “why” the interviewed staff thought the program positively affected these students. Many felt that the intimate environment provided by the program helped to facilitate growth. According to the ASEP staff, students have the opportunity to work one-on-one or in small groups in the after-school program, whereas they do not have this opportunity during the regular school day. Outside of the additional help after-school instructors provided, the interviewed staff felt that the simple point of contact between the students and an adult that cared about them was beneficial. Several highlighted the students’ backgrounds and explained that many of the students in the program do not have a consistent adult role model willing to give them individual attention. Moreover, a couple noted that the students had a place in which they felt they belonged, thus increasing ownership and accountability for personal actions.

In addition to extra support provided through the program, site coordinators also sited the program environment as influential. Some felt that the structured environment helped students to focus. Others believed that the alternative learning format offered through the after-school program provided students with methods of learning. For example, one site coordinator talked about a third grade boy who was in her class during the regular school day:

In the program, the student was able to spend time working in small group activities, something that he did not get in the regular day class. The supportive environment helped him feel more comfortable, and he was able to make friends for the first time. His behavior has improved, he completes his work and has developed into a very bright student. He responds particularly well to the programs’ literacy games. Instead of the regular repetitive tasks he was failing to respond to in school, the program’s variety of activities provides the student with challenges to succeed. His mother is happy that her child has a place to go after-school where there are caring individuals that spend time with him.

In addition to stories of behavioral and academic success, a few ASEP personnel told stories about students in their program who discovered talents that might otherwise have gone uncultivated:

One student in particular entered the program never having played an instrument. Within a short period, he learned how to play the first instrument the teacher introduced. The music teacher introduced another instrument, which the student also learned quickly. The student has learned enough of the fundamentals of music to play any instrument he would like. The music teacher works hard to keep the student

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challenged and interested. Without participating in the program, the student may never have become involved in music and his gift would have gone undeveloped.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The purpose of interviewing program staff in the at each of the 92 program sites with the After-School Enrichment Program was to garner a broad description of how the key elements of the program are being implemented across Los Angeles County⁴. Within each of the six areas explored (funding streams, enrollment and attendance, program support, family and parent involvement, literacy and mathematics and success stories), variety was the most prominent finding across ASEPs. Based on interview responses, school and district personnel have developed as many ways of delivering after-school programs as there are sites.

Even among sites where the district coordinates the program, local program staff have adapted program parameters to meet what they perceive to be the needs of their unique student populations. This is displayed most notably in the array of math, literacy and technology activities and programs listed by program staff as effective in facilitating and motivating student learning. Some sites cited a centralized pedagogy that runs throughout the program as successful. Others discussed stand-alone activities that have been successful. The multiplicity of approaches identified by program staff suggests that even with the program expectations set forth in the program grant, sites have not taken a “cookie cutter” approach to developing effective programs.

Though the delivery and content of programs varied from site to site, several trends emerged in the responses of program staff across sites. The identification of eligible students was a concern among a number of sites and was discussed both in the context of enrollment and attendance, as well as challenges encountered with program implementation. Interestingly, the way in which sites went about obtaining this information was different from site to site according to program staff. While some sites have taken on the task individually, others look to their district, while another group stated that they get the information directly from LACOE (most often their regional coordinator). Many listed the lack of a standardized procedure for collecting and processing this information as a contributor to the confusion. This was an issue both at the identification stage as well as with verifying eligibility.

According to the after-school program staff who were interviewed, the core consequence of encountering barriers in identifying eligible CalWORKs students has been that many sites have been unable to fill the allotted number of slots with students. Multiple coordinators sited that they know the population exists, but because of the transient nature of the population and challenges they have encountered in “finding” the students, they have been unable to serve to students for which the program is designated.

Outside of identifying eligible students, in general, after-school program staff interviewed said that their school site, the district and LACOE have been instrumental in the implementation of the after-school programs. At the LACOE level, many highlighted the positive role the LACOE regional coordinators. In addition to being helpful with the paperwork and accounting associated with the program, site coordinators also mentioned that they (regional coordinators) offered programming resources and examples of successful strategies from other sites. Site personnel mentioned the district offices most often in the

⁴ Excluding the Los Angeles Unified School District.

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context of providing support with accounting processes including payroll and invoicing. Finally, at the school level, principal leadership, staff support and the use of classrooms and facilities were discussed as most useful in facilitating a successful program.

Across sites, evidence emerged from the interviews that parents are using the program for childcare purposes. While none of the after-school program staff interviewed attempted to provide formal evidence, many said they knew anecdotally that parents had found work, in part, because their children were provided with after-school childcare. Several also noted that parents of students in their program had returned to school. One of the purposes of the ASEP is to provide childcare so that CalWORKs adults can find and maintain gainful employment. Based on interview responses, the after-school program appears to be working with this purpose.

Patterns in the success stories told by program staff reveals a final trend regarding the after-school programs. While many discussed increases in academic performance, a larger percentage of program staff spoke about students who demonstrated behavioral and social changes. The spectrum ranged from students who were openly aggressive before the program, to students who were shy and did not participate in school before entering the program. Regardless of the type of behavior issue, when asked why they felt the program had made a difference, across individual sites, program staff discussed the unique and nurturing environment provided by the program. In essence, many of the program staff interviewed said that in the after-school program, students were given one-on-one attention and were able to develop relationships with adult figures in a way that was not possible in the school day, or even at home. Thus, in addition to filling childcare and academic needs, evidence from the interview responses suggest that the ASEP are helping to satisfy a gap in human connection experienced by children in this population.

Next Steps

This report is the first in a series of methods that will be utilized to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the LACOE After School Enrichment Program. A year end final report, will discuss the aggregate baseline findings from a set of comprehensive site visits, stakeholder surveys and student outcomes analysis from a sample of ASEP sites.

Appendix A

Phone Interview Protocol

ASEP Overarching Questions

Introduction

Hello, my name is _____ and I work for Public Works, Inc. As you are aware, Public Works, Inc. was selected as the outside evaluator for the LACOE After-school Enrichment Program. Public Works, Inc. is a non-profit educational consulting firm located in Pasadena.

As a component of the evaluation, we are conducting brief phone interviews with the Site Coordinator at every After School Enrichment Program (ASEP) site. In early December, our Public Works, Inc. staff met with the ASEP director and regional coordinators to brainstorm on the types of information to collect. The purpose of this brainstorming session was to develop a set of broad questions to guide the interviews. Collectively, the group came up with five general questions.

Since the questions were developed around the need to gather descriptive information about the after-school programs, there are no right or wrong answers. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability.

Before we get started, do you have any questions?

- i. When is your school's Spring Break?
- ii. Is your school on a traditional or tracked schedule? (If tracks, please explain)
- iii. What is the name of the program?

Funding streams

A.1 Are funding streams other than LACOE, for example State (Safe Neighborhoods) or Federal (21st Century), contributing to your program?

A.a IF YES, please describe?

A.b IF NO, are there other after-school programs on your campus? If yes, what are they?

I. Enrollment and program attendance

1. Motivating students to attend and keeping them into the evening can be a challenge in after-school programs.

A. Have you been able to enroll and retain a consistent group of student participants in your program?

- a. IF NO: What do you think have been the challenges.
- b. IF YES: What strategies or incentives have been successful in developing and maintaining a consistent population?

B. Have you been able to keep students to the end of the program day?

- a. IF NO: What do you think have been the challenges.

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- b. IF YES: What strategies or incentives have been successful in developing and maintaining a consistent population?

II. Programmatic Support

2. Your school site, district and the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) all play roles in your program to varying degrees. Please answer the following questions as they relate to your school site, your district and, or LACOE:

- A. What has the school, the district and/ or LACOE provided that has been useful?
- B. What barriers have any of these offices created that have challenged successful implementation of the program?
- C. What could these offices provide that would support the successful implementation of the program?
- D. Please complete the following sentence: *Without LACOE funding we could not...*

III. Family and Parent Involvement

3. One of the purposes of the After-school Enrichment Program is to provide a safe and enriching place for students to be during after-school hours so that their parent or guardian can work.

- A. Have you found any evidence that previously unemployed parents of your students have found work and are therefore using the program as childcare? If yes, about how many families?
- B. How are parents involved in the after-school program? For example, do they volunteer in the program? Do they attend classes at the school? Do they participate on parent advisory groups?

IV. Math and Literacy Programs

4. One of the main goals of the After-school Enrichment Program is to increase academic performance, particularly in literacy and mathematics.

- A. Can you describe a literacy, mathematics, technology or other academic related program or activity going on in your after-school program for which you are particularly proud or feel is particularly successful. This may include direct academic intervention, or the integration of academics into enrichment activities such as art or music.
- B. What strategies have you found to be successful in actively engaging students in mathematics and literacy activities?
- C. What sort of linkages are there between the regular school day and after-school program. For instance, is student information shared between the two?

V. Individual Success Stories

5. Individual successes are hard to measure with standardized assessment tools. For this reason, can you share a specific example, or examples of a student or students in your program who have been impacted by the after-school program. The impact can be academic, social, behavior, emotional or other.

Appendix B

List of ASEP Programs with Enrollment

List of ASEP Programs with Enrollment¹

School	#	School	#	School	#
ABC USD		Inglewood USD		Lynwoods USD	
Aloha Elementary	34	Highland Elementary	65	Wilson Elementary	56
Alhambra CSD		Hudnall Elementary	72	Paramount USD	
Northrup Elementary	25	Lane Elementary	43	Collins Elementary	8
Ramona Elementary	44	Woodworth Elem.	50	Wirtz Elementary	10
Azusa USD		Lancaster SD		Pasadena USD	
Murray Elementary	75	Desert View Elem.	114	Altadena Elementary	110
Baldwin Park SD		El Dorado Elem.	114	Cleveland Elem.	90
De Anza Elementary	49	Joshua Elementary	123	Edison Elementary	95
Bellflower USD		Linda Verde ES	119	Field Elementary	36
Washington Elem.	58	Mariposa Elementary	103	Franklin Elementary	92
Williams Elementary	40	Sierra Elementary	112	Hamilton Elem.	100
Compton USD		Sunnydale Elem.	98	Jackson Elementary	120
Anderson Elem.,	55	Lawndale SD		Loma Alta Elem.	100
Bunche Elementary	31	Anderson Elem.	179	Longfellow Elem.	140
Bursch Elementary	44	Green Elementary	194	Madison Elementary	140
Caldwell Street ES	25	Mitchell Elementary	85	San Rafael Elem.	37
Carver Elementary	35	Roosevelt Elem.	72	Webster Elementary	159
Dickson Elementary	37	Lennox SD		Willard Elementary	115
Foster Elementary	50	Felton Elementary	62	Pomona USD	
Kelly Elementary	65	Long Beach USD		Alcott Elementary	26
Kennedy Elementary	52	Barton Elementary	56	Kingsley Elementary	18
King Elementary	43	Bryant Elementary	35	Madison Elementary	14
Laurel Street ES	38	Burnett Elementary	52	Roosevelt Elem.	2
Lincoln Elementary	30	Edison Elementary	44	San Antonio ES	4
Longfellow Elem.	50	Harte Elementary	75	Vejar Elementary	26
Mayo Elementary	41	International Elem.	43	Washington Elem.	12
McKinley Elementary	42	King Elementary	53	Rowland USD	
McNair Elementary	33	Lafayette Elementary	51	Yorbits Elementary	80
Rosecrans Elem.	41	Lee Elementary	53	Whittier CSD	
Tibby Elementary	38	McKinley Elementary	26	Hoover Elementary	40
Vanguard Lrn. Ctr.	26	Roosevelt Elementary	50	Jackson Elementary	56
Washington Elem.	43	Signal Hill Elem.	44	Lincoln Elementary	34
Willard Elementary	22	Stevenson Elementary	50	Phelan Elementary	23
El Rancho SD		Whittier Elementary	95		
Magree Elementary	25	Willard Elementary	151		
Selby Elementary	32	Palmdale USD			
Garvey SD		Manzanita Elem.	89		
Duff Elementary	41	Tamarisk Elementary	106		

¹ Some sites receive funding in addition to LACOE ASEP funding. For this reason, enrollment at several sites exceeds the average number of 50 slots allocated by LACOE.

Appendix C

LACOE After-School Enrichment Program Pillars of a Successful After-School Program

LACOE After-School Enrichment Program Pillars of a Successful After-School Program

1. Supports the classroom teacher by promoting student achievement in alignment with the State framework in the areas of English language arts, mathematics and technology.
2. Offers a variety of services and activities.
3. Provides a positive environment for students; encourages both personal wellness and community services; and discourages unhealthy and/or illegal activities.
4. Supports student achievement of academic and behavioral standards.
5. Promotes healthy behaviors and physical, mental and social growth.
6. Provides program leadership, coordinator and safe supervision of children by qualified personnel with appropriate background check including health and fingerprint clearance.
7. Incorporates an assessment of needs of the children.
8. Encourages cross-age tutoring.
9. Offers program-related strategies and activities to meet the needs of children.
10. Collaboration with appropriate organizations such as the following: other city agencies, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, Even Start, Family Head Start, literacy programs and the private sector.
11. Takes advantage of an inventory of available resources.
12. Ensures communication between the classroom teachers and program staff concerning academic and social progress of participants in the program.
13. Involves parents, students, teachers, community groups and staff.
14. Integrates with existing community and school-based programs.
15. Provides appropriate liability insurance.
16. Includes nourishment (nutritious snacks and where appropriate, meals).
17. Provides structured physical activity and recreation.
18. Provides a safe haven and a safe corridor for children.
19. Deters children from participation in gang-related activities.
20. Includes provisions for program evaluation, includes a self-assessment plan that includes participant/ parent satisfaction surveys and addresses issues of safety and quality.
21. Is consistent with the requirements of LACOE and the County of Los Angeles.
22. Assesses the training needs of staff and provides training relevant to the responsibilities of each job.